

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 3224 amends the National Dam Safety Program Act to establish a program to provide grant assistance to States for the rehabilitation and repair of deficient dams.

I would like to commend Congressman RANDY KUHL for his steadfast leadership on this issue. He was the original sponsor of similar legislation this year, and he was instrumental in the reauthorization of the National Dam Safety Program last year. I would also like to thank Mr. SALAZAR, again, for his leadership in this issue also.

This bill would authorize a program at the Federal Emergency Management Agency to provide funding for repairs to publicly owned dams that would pose a direct risk to human life if they failed. The number of unsafe dams has risen by 80 percent since 1998 to more than 3,200.

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This grant program would fund repairs of the most critical dams, which the Association of State Dam Safety officials estimates is a \$10 billion need over the next 12 years. Dams require ongoing maintenance, monitoring, and rehabilitation. Many States are unable to fund necessary repairs to publicly owned dams without assistance from the Federal Government. This new program will provide assistance up to 65 percent of the cost of the repairs. H.R. 3224 authorizes the program for 5 years at \$200 million.

Mr. Speaker, this is an important issue throughout the country in areas with numerous old and abandoned dams. Too often, the 19th century companies that built the dams no longer exist and local governments are left with orphaned dams in their jurisdiction. These downstream communities have a responsibility to protect their population, but they rarely have the tax base or revenue to repair the failing dams.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SALAZAR. I want to thank the gentleman from Arkansas for his leadership also on transportation issues. This is a very important piece of legislation. Mr. Speaker, this legislation has strong bipartisan support and outside groups, including the Association of State Dam Safety Officials, American Rivers, the American Society of Civil Engineers and the Associated General Contractors, who all have endorsed this important piece of legislation.

I want to thank the gentleman from New York, Mr. RANDY KUHL, for working with us on this critical bill, as well as other committee members of the Transportation Committee who have supported this bill as well. I would urge my colleagues to swiftly pass H.R. 3224.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 3224, as amended, a bill to further enhance the safety of and bring to a state of good repair our Nation's aging

dam infrastructure. This important bill has broad bipartisan support.

I commend the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. SALAZAR) and the gentleman from New York (Mr. KUHL) for introducing this legislation and for their strong support. I would also like to thank Subcommittee Chairwoman NORTON for her leadership and for diligently guiding the work of the Subcommittee on the issue of dam safety and rehabilitation.

During a May 8, 2007 hearing, the Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management received compelling testimony about the need to rehabilitate our Nation's dams. The statements of witnesses reinforced some troubling statistics. There are approximately 80,000 dams in the United States; of these, approximately 10,000 dams are considered to have high-hazard potential, meaning their failure could result in loss of life or severe property damage. From 2000 to 2006, the number of high-hazard dams increased by almost 20 percent.

Further, States have identified approximately 3,400 dams as currently deficient or unsafe. These dams have been identified as having hydrologic or structural deficiencies that make them susceptible to failure triggered by a storm, an earthquake, progressive deterioration, or inadequate maintenance.

Since 1972, Congress has helped to mitigate the risk of dam failure by establishing a program to provide technical and financial assistance to States for dam safety. Through the National Dam Safety Program, the Federal government has helped to increase the level of knowledge and preparedness to prevent and mitigate the effects of dam failures across the country. Dam safety inspections have increased significantly and greater direct assistance has been provided for training State officials and providing technical seminars and workshops.

H.R. 3224 builds on this successful program and authorizes the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency ("FEMA") to provide grants for the rehabilitation and repair of publicly-owned dams. States must provide at least 35 percent of the funds necessary to rehabilitate a dam. While all States are eligible to apply, grants will be distributed after prioritization by the Administrator, along with the National Dam Safety Review Board, of all applications, based on degree of deficiency.

The bill is a necessary step in the right direction to upgrade our Nation's aging dam infrastructure.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 3224.

Mr. SALAZAR. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. SALAZAR) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3224, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Madam Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the

Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

HURRICANES KATRINA AND RITA RECOVERY FACILITATION ACT OF 2007

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3247) to improve the provision of disaster assistance for Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3247

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Hurricanes Katrina and Rita Recovery Facilitation Act of 2007".

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act, the following definitions apply:

(1) COVERED HURRICANE DAMAGES.—The term "covered hurricane damages" means damages suffered in the States of Louisiana and Mississippi as a result of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

(2) PRESIDENT.—The term "President" means the President acting through the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

(3) STAFFORD ACT.—The term "Stafford Act" means the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5121 et seq.).

SEC. 3. SPECIAL RULES FOR COVERED HURRICANE DAMAGES.

(a) IN LIEU CONTRIBUTIONS.—In providing contributions under section 406(c) of the Stafford Act (42 U.S.C. 5172(c)) for covered hurricane damages, the President shall substitute 90 percent for the otherwise applicable percentage specified in paragraphs (1)(A) and (2)(A) of such section.

(b) PARTICIPATION IN PILOT PROJECTS.—The States of Louisiana and Mississippi and local governments in such States shall be eligible to participate in the pilot program established by section 689j of the Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act, 2007 (6 U.S.C. 777) with respect to covered hurricane damages.

(c) ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROCEDURES.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding section 423 of the Stafford Act (42 U.S.C. 5189a) or any regulation, the President is authorized and encouraged to use alternative dispute resolution procedures for appeals of decisions made under sections 403, 406, and 407 of the Stafford Act (42 U.S.C. 5179b, 5172, and 5173) regarding the award or denial of assistance, or the amount of assistance, provided to a State, local government, or owner or operator of a private facility for covered hurricane damages.

(2) DENIALS OF REQUESTS.—

(A) WRITTEN NOTICE.—If a State, local government, or owner or operator of a private facility requests the use of alternative dispute resolution procedures for an appeal pursuant to paragraph (1) and the President denies the request, the President shall provide to the State, local government, or owner or operator written notice of the denial, including the reasons for the denial.

(B) QUARTERLY REPORTS.—The President shall submit to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives and the Committee on

Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate, on at least a quarterly basis, a report containing information on any denial described in subparagraph (A) made by the President during the period covered by the report, including the reasons for the denial.

(3) **APPLICABILITY.**—Paragraph (1) shall apply to an appeal made by a State, local government, or owner or operator of a private facility within 60 days after the date on which the State, local government, or owner or operator is notified of the decision that is the subject of the appeal.

(4) **REPORT TO CONGRESS.**—Not later than one year after the date of enactment of this Act, the President shall submit to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate a report containing a description of how alternative dispute resolution procedures are being used pursuant to this subsection and recommendations on whether the President should be given the authority to use such procedures under the Stafford Act on a permanent basis.

(d) **ESSENTIAL ASSISTANCE.**—In providing assistance under section 403 of the Stafford Act for covered hurricane damages, the President may provide assistance for the reinterment of human remains at a privately-owned or private nonprofit cemetery.

(e) **USE OF SIMPLIFIED PROCEDURES.**—For covered hurricane damages, the President may use, if requested by a State or local government or the owner or operator of a private nonprofit facility, section 422 of the Stafford Act (42 U.S.C. 5189) for a project for which the Federal estimate of the cost is less than \$100,000.

(f) **USE OF TEMPORARY HOUSING UNITS TO PROVIDE HOUSING TO VOLUNTEERS.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—In providing assistance under title IV of the Stafford Act (42 U.S.C. 5170 et seq.) for covered hurricane damages, the President may provide temporary housing units purchased under section 408 of the Stafford Act (42 U.S.C. 5174) to State and local governments and appropriate private nonprofit entities for the purpose of providing housing to volunteers assisting in the recovery from such damages.

(2) **FEASIBILITY DETERMINATION.**—The President may provide temporary housing units for the purposes described in paragraph (1) only if the President determines that such assistance is appropriate, cost effective, and would not unduly interfere with the ability of the Federal Emergency Management Agency to provide housing for individuals and households with respect to other major disasters.

(g) **CONTRIBUTIONS FOR PUBLIC FACILITIES USED TO HOST PUBLIC EVENTS.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Notwithstanding sections 403 and 406 of the Stafford Act (42 U.S.C. 5170b and 5172), the President may make contributions to the State of Louisiana for—

(A) costs incurred for the repair or restoration of a public facility used to host public events if the facility was damaged as a result of use in conducting response activities for Hurricane Katrina or Rita;

(B) costs incurred because response activities for Hurricane Katrina or Rita precluded the normal use of a public facility used to host public events;

(C) costs incurred for necessary materials provided to evacuees of Hurricane Katrina or Rita in a public facility used to host public events; and

(D) the reasonable costs of renting or leasing a public facility used to host public events that was used for conducting response activities for Hurricane Katrina or Rita.

(2) **LIMITATIONS.**—

(A) **CONTRIBUTIONS FOR REPAIR AND RESTORATION COSTS.**—Contributions made under paragraph (1)(A) shall be limited to repair and restoration costs associated with damages described in paragraph (1)(A) that occurred—

(i) in the case of damages related to Hurricane Katrina, on or before October 27, 2005; and

(ii) in the case of damages related to Hurricane Rita, on or before November 23, 2005.

(B) **CONTRIBUTIONS FOR COSTS INCURRED FOR CANCELLED EVENTS.**—

(1) **EVENT REQUIREMENTS.**—Contributions made under paragraph (1)(B) shall be limited to costs that are documented for an event—

(I) for which there was a binding commitment for use of the facility in effect prior to August 29, 2005; and

(II) that was scheduled to be held on or before December 31, 2005, at the facility.

(ii) **LOST REVENUES.**—Contributions under paragraph (1)(B) shall not be made for any lost revenues.

(C) **CONTRIBUTIONS FOR REASONABLE COSTS OF RENTING OR LEASING.**—Contributions made under paragraph (1)(D) shall be limited to the reasonable costs of renting or leasing the facility during the period beginning on August 29, 2005, and ending on January 6, 2006.

(3) **COSTS RECOVERABLE FROM OTHER SOURCES.**—Costs that may be recovered by the State of Louisiana from any other program or from insurance or another source shall not be eligible for assistance under this subsection.

(4) **LIMITATION ON STATUTORY CONSTRUCTION.**—Nothing in this section shall be construed to affect eligibility for assistance under section 403 or 406 of the Stafford Act (42 U.S.C. 5170b or 5172), except to the extent that such assistance would result in a duplication of benefits.

(5) **FEDERAL SHARE.**—The Federal share of assistance under this subsection shall be 100 percent of the eligible costs.

(6) **FUNDING.**—Amounts appropriated to carry out sections 403 and 406 of the Stafford Act (42 U.S.C. 5170b and 5172) shall be available to carry out this section, including amounts appropriated before the date of enactment of this Act.

(h) **STATUS REPORT.**—Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the President shall submit to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate a report regarding the status of recovery for the States of Louisiana and Mississippi from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

(i) **HAZARD MITIGATION PROJECTS.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—A project for covered hurricane damages initiated by the State of Louisiana or Mississippi in the period beginning on August 29, 2005, and ending on the date of enactment of this Act may contribute toward the non-Federal share of assistance under section 404 of the Stafford Act (42 U.S.C. 5170c) if the project—

(A) complies with all applicable Federal laws governing assistance under such section, and

(B) otherwise is eligible to contribute to the non-Federal share of assistance under such section,

notwithstanding any requirement for approval of the eligibility and compliance of a project by the President prior to the initiation of the project contributing toward the non-Federal share.

(2) **APPLICATIONS.**—The States of Louisiana and Mississippi may submit an application to the President under section 404 of the Stafford Act with respect to any project described in paragraph (1).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) and the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. BOUSTANY) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia? There was no objection.

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in support of H.R. 3247, the Katrina and Rita Recovery Facilitation Act of 2007. This bill has been a top priority of our leadership and has received excellent cooperation and support from the minority and its Members as well. It was reported by the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee on August 1, 2007. On May 10, 2007, our subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings and Emergency Management held a hearing entitled, "Legislative Fixes for Lingering Problems that Hinder Katrina Recovery," where Members from Louisiana and Mississippi testified on issues that were still delaying the recovery from these extraordinarily destructive storms, particularly in the Public Assistance Program.

These were problems that, and I stress, could not have been envisioned by the Stafford Act because of the unprecedented nature of the gulf coast disaster. Therefore, it was felt that there was a need for amendments to the act since FEMA often felt it could not move without specific authority.

This bill addresses issues specifically identified by these Members who represent the gulf coast area in testimony before our committee, testimony that was evaluated by our subcommittee and found to be compatible with the mission of the Stafford Act and the unique nature of the Katrina and Rita disasters.

For example, the bill allows FEMA to apply its so-called "simplified procedures" for "small projects" from the current threshold of \$55,000 to \$100,000, and authorizes FEMA to use alternative dispute resolution to resolve appeals in the Public Assistance Program. There have been many appeals. These need to be handled expeditiously if recovery is to occur expeditiously.

Madam Speaker, the bill also increases the Federal contribution for large "in-lieu" projects, also known as alternate projects, to 90 percent for both public and private nonprofit facilities. These are examples of remedies that will bring significant results, according to our own investigation and testimony from the region.

Hurricane Katrina made landfall nearly 2 years ago and proved to be the costliest natural disaster in American history. The storms had a massive physical impact on the land, affecting 90,000 square miles, which is an area the size of Great Britain. More than 80 percent of the City of New Orleans flooded, which is an area seven times the size of Manhattan. Untold consequences to the residents of the region were visited upon individuals and families.

Our subcommittee will hold a hearing in New Orleans soon to look further into the status of recovery from these storms. We certainly did not want to go to the region without passage of this act, which is so urgent to recovery. I am pleased that we will be able to report to the citizens of the gulf that our committee and hopefully the House has taken further steps to facilitate the recovery of the entire gulf coast.

I urge the support of all Members.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BOUSTANY. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, H.R. 3247, introduced by Subcommittee Chairwoman NORTON, will improve the provision of disaster assistance for Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. This bill was created through an open and inclusive process. I want to thank Chairman OBERSTAR and Chairwoman NORTON for working with our Republican Members to include our provisions to this bill. Additionally, I want to thank my good friend and colleague from Louisiana, Ranking Member BAKER, for his steadfast support of Louisiana in the wake of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Congressman BAKER has been a great advocate for our State, and I thank him for helping the committee to draft this bill.

Madam Speaker, earlier this year the Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings and Emergency Management held a hearing on the recovery in the gulf coast following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The bill includes a number of provisions recommended by Members of Congress from both parties who testified at this hearing. These provisions are designed to alleviate specific problems with the recovery in the gulf coast.

H.R. 3247 authorizes changes to the Stafford Act programs exclusively for the recovery from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and applies these changes retroactively. The Congressional Budget Office does not expect these proposed changes to have a significant effect on the pace or amount of Federal expenditures from the disaster relief fund and has estimated that enacting H.R. 3247 would have no significant effect on direct spending. I support this legislation, and I encourage my colleagues to do the same.

I also want to thank Chairman OBERSTAR and Chairwoman NORTON specifi-

cally for working with our gulf coast delegations on this important legislation. The T&I committee has really been very helpful and a strong advocate throughout this process, as my home State of Louisiana and the rest of the gulf coast have tried to recover. I am pleased that the tradition continues today with the work on this bill.

I also want to mention that while much of the Nation's focus remains on the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, I want to remind my colleagues that there were two storms of similar magnitude that hit the gulf coast in 2005. The second storm, Hurricane Rita, brought high winds in excess of 120 miles an hour and a storm surge equivalent to that of a category 5 storm. Total damage in southwest Louisiana was estimated at approximately \$10 billion, making Rita, the forgotten storm, the third most costly natural disaster in U.S. history.

Two years later our recovery remains slow, but progress is being made and the people of southwest Louisiana are resilient and we will rebuild. This bill will help fix some of the roadblocks to recovery that we have encountered along the way. Notably, I want to mention one particularly. The bill addresses one of the bigger problems still lingering in my own district, which is the reimbursement to the sports arena called the Cajundome for use of the facility in sheltering both Katrina and Rita evacuees. The Cajundome acted as a shelter from August 30 through October 28, 2005, and processed an estimated 18,000 evacuees within that 60-day period. The facility was subsequently closed until January 2006 for recovery and repair from the sheltering operations. FEMA initially approved and then sought reimbursement for funds paid to the Cajundome for use of the facility while conducting response activities.

At issue is whether or not a government entity can be reimbursed for fees for sheltering evacuees after a disaster. The Cajundome, however, operates autonomously from city government, does not have a sustaining tax base, and instead relies on the fees it generates from events during its peak season to maintain operations year-round. H.R. 3247 will allow FEMA to pay for the reasonable cost of renting or leasing a public facility that was used for conducting response activities for Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Facilities like the Cajundome are integral to our disaster recovery and response. We shouldn't punish them for opening their doors and providing shelter during a national crisis.

Again, I want to thank the committee staff as well, especially Mike Herman and Jennifer Hall, for working with my legislative director, Terri Fish, to develop language that will address this problem. Again, I thank Chairman OBERSTAR, Chairwoman NORTON, and Ranking Members MICA and GRAVES for including it in the bill. Again, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 3247.

Madam Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to my colleague from Louisiana (Mr. BAKER).

Mr. BAKER. I thank the gentleman for yielding time and certainly want to express appreciation to Chairwoman NORTON, as well as Chairman OBERSTAR, for their continuing attention, courtesy and problem-solving for those of us along coastal States suffering yet from the aftermath of storms Katrina and Rita. Particularly, I want to speak to the great work of Congressman BOUSTANY representing his community. As he expressed here this afternoon, the second storm of the season which followed Katrina, Hurricane Rita, was just as devastating to his community, as was Katrina to coastal portions of eastern Louisiana. He has been the singular outspoken voice for the victims of that disaster in seeking relief and remedies that are appropriate.

Madam Speaker, contained in this resolution before us today is a unique resolution, as the Stafford Act never contemplated disasters of the magnitude and scope that affected our State. The duration was unexpected, as well as the intensity of the damage. A few would have thought an inconvenience of a few days for a public facility would be cause for reimbursement from the Stafford Act.

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But in this case the damage went on not just for days and not just for weeks but literally for months. And income that was planned for many of these facilities was lost, as well as the operational expense to engage in the relief activities. As well, unfortunately, in the damage that occurred to the facilities as a result of this unusual and prolonged use.

For example, the Lamar Dixon Center on the southern edge of the City of Baton Rouge acted as the staging point for many law enforcement search and rescue efforts which went on for many days. As a result of the sheriff, police, municipal police and others simply engaging in this activity without seeking preclearance, not having a contract with FEMA in order to save people, Lamar Dixon similarly engaged in the care and feeding of literally thousands of those engaged in daily rescue activities.

We were surprised to learn that the Stafford Act provisions would not allow for the reimbursement of these highly appropriate and highly valuable services rendered during the height of the storm.

Today, with the adoption of this bill, we cure these deficiencies. And although I hope such need would never arise in any other community in our country, if it does, these changes are meaningful not only to the people who engage in the service but to the communities who likewise support and help in this most dire of recovery circumstances. I join with my colleague, Mr. BOUSTANY, to support this legislation.

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to yield to the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. MELANCON) such time as he may consume.

Mr. MELANCON. Thank you, Congresswoman HOLMES NORTON, for your leadership in moving this piece of legislation forward. I also commend my colleagues and friends from Louisiana who also understand that Ms. HOLMES NORTON and others have been a genuinely great help to the folks of Louisiana and Mississippi and the affected areas of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

I am proud of what we have done in Congress to address the recovery and rebuilding needs along the gulf coast after these two unprecedented storms, Katrina and Rita, and our needs are still great. They have not gone away.

From my experience over the last 2 years, I found that the Stafford Act was not written for disasters the size of Katrina and Rita, nor was FEMA prepared to respond, particularly in the long term, to events of this magnitude. H.R. 3247 would amend the Stafford Act to more accurately reflect the rebuilding and recovery needs of the gulf coast. St. Bernard Parish in my district only has a handful of buildings that were not damaged in the storms, and less than 40 percent of the population has returned to the parish.

Through the alternate project penalty, the Stafford essentially penalizes the parish and its officials as they try to rebuild and reflect the returning population. H.R. 3247 would reduce this penalty from 25 percent to 10 percent of each of the project's costs, and this is enormous in the needs that follow and has been mentioned about the inadequacies of the Stafford Act.

The bill would also instruct FEMA to use alternate dispute resolution in place of its completely inadequate project worksheet appeals process. Many project worksheets are still under review after 27 months. Without a guarantee that the project will be fully funded, the State and local governments are apprehensive to even begin projects for fear that FEMA will ask for the money back. FEMA itself is preventing the rebuilding of the gulf coast. It is not their intention, but it is the reality, and this needs to change.

I appreciate all of the work Congress has done to address the recovery and rebuilding needs of the gulf coast, and I ask that my colleagues again assist with easing the restrictions to allow for full recovery by supporting H.R. 3247. I thank you for the opportunity to speak on this issue, and I thank the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia for her efforts and the efforts of my friends and colleagues on the other side of the aisle for helping in this rebuilding effort in an effort to bring FEMA to a position of reality rather than bureaucracy.

Mr. BOUSTANY. Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Louisiana (Mr. MELANCON). Together, he and I have all of coastal Louisiana, and we have dealt with this disaster first-

hand. I know side by side along the coast, we were rolling up our sleeves and helping our friends and families back home through all of this. I want to thank him for his work in helping to come up with these revisions to the Stafford Act that were desperately needed.

This is a good piece of legislation. It will not cure all of the problems we still have in coastal Louisiana, but it is a good start. I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to pass this important legislation, H.R. 3247. Again, I thank Chairwoman NORTON and Chairman OBERSTAR for their willingness to work with us to craft this legislation.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, once again I want to thank the gentleman and all of the Members from the gulf coast delegation who worked so cooperatively with us, really informing us what needed to be done, looking at the Stafford Act, understanding we are amending the act for Katrina and Rita purposes only, and the least Congress could do was to recognize in all of our rhetoric about this being an unprecedented disaster, that we responded with an unprecedented remedy. We do not expect the remedies available here to be necessary elsewhere. For example, we have just had a big disaster in California. That is of a different kind and will have a different effect on the entire region; very devastating, but very different. We intend to have a hearing with respect to that disaster and comparing that disaster and the responses to that disaster with the responses to the gulf coast because we need to do all we can to learn about that disaster.

Moreover, the Katrina and Rita disasters have exposed other changes in the Stafford Act that we need. These are Rita and Katrina-specific changes, but we are learning from what happened to this extraordinary region of our country without which we cannot do. And every day you see oil prices go up, I hope you understand, we in the United States, how central this region is to the economy of this country. As a result, we will be holding hearings on the way in which the Stafford Act should be even further updated to the benefit not only of the disasters we hope never to see again, but to disasters that may occur in the future in our country.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 3247, the "Katrina and Rita Recovery Facilitation Act of 2007", as amended. This bipartisan bill addresses lingering issues that continue to hinder the recovery from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The changes in this bill are both necessary and long overdue.

Hurricane Katrina made landfall on August 29, 2005, and proved to be the costliest natural disaster in American history. The storm had a massive physical impact on the land, affecting 90,000 square miles, which is an area the size of Great Britain. More than 80 percent of the City of New Orleans flooded, an area

comparable to seven times the size of Manhattan.

Although more than two years have elapsed since Katrina and Rita, significant problems still exist in the recovery effort. This disaster and its aftermath have revealed that the Federal Emergency Management Agency ("FEMA") may need additional authorities to deal effectively with catastrophes of such magnitude.

H.R. 3247 provides additional relief for problems associated with recovery efforts from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, by authorizing retroactive changes to the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act ("Stafford Act") programs. The Stafford Act authorizes disaster assistance that FEMA provides after a major disaster. While the authority of the Stafford Act is very broad and flexible, it does not anticipate every circumstance that can arise in disasters, especially catastrophic disasters such as Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Historically, when catastrophic or unusual disasters struck, Congress would work cooperatively with FEMA to identify areas where FEMA required additional specific authority. When Hurricane Katrina struck, FEMA was not a flexible or independent government agency. Rather, FEMA was an organization within the Department of Homeland Security, a larger bureaucracy, and without direct access to the President and Congress. I believe that this structure prevented FEMA from engaging with Congress as they have in the past. This problem was further magnified by the unprecedented scope and magnitude of the disaster. As a result, Congress was forced to act in a unilateral manner.

H.R. 3247 was developed in a bipartisan fashion, and draws on the recommendations of Members representing the Gulf Coast region from both sides of the aisle. The provisions in this bill were developed following a hearing held by the Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management on May 10, 2007, entitled "Legislative Fixes for Lingering Problems that Hinder Katrina Recovery". At that hearing, Members from Louisiana and Mississippi testified on specific issues that are still hampering the recovery from these devastating catastrophes and proposed solutions. The provisions of this bill reflect the findings and recommendations that were presented at this hearing.

Specifically, H.R. 3247, the "Hurricanes Katrina and Rita Recovery Facilitation Act of 2007", increases the Federal share from 75 percent to 90 percent for "alternate projects" for Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, to allow money designated for a specific facility to be used toward another facility for the same purposes. This provision will help communities, which have had multiple facilities destroyed by these hurricanes, rebuild facilities and reestablish services in a manner that will best suit their needs.

The bill also permits the Administrator of FEMA to make public assistance programs under Hurricanes Katrina and Rita eligible under a public assistance pilot program authorized in section 689j of the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act (P.L. 109-295), which will expedite the provision of assistance to States.

This legislation further encourages alternative dispute resolution procedures for appeals of public assistance decisions by FEMA

for Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, to address concerns over the speed of implementation of the public assistance program in the Gulf Coast. The bill allows the use of temporary housing units for volunteers, authorizes reimbursement of expenses incurred for the re-entertainment of human remains at privately-owned or private non-profit cemeteries, and authorizes the reimbursement of certain facilities that housed evacuees after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

The bill also allows in-kind projects initiated in the recovery efforts after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita to contribute the non-Federal share in a Hazard Mitigation Grant Program ("HMGP") application, if FEMA can determine that the project meets all eligibility and compliance requirements that apply to HMGP projects. This provision simply waives the requirement for pre-approval of a project.

Madam Speaker, each of the provisions in H.R. 3247 is specifically tailored to solve an existing problem in the Gulf Coast, and will help provide immediate relief to those still suffering in the wake of these disasters.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 3247.

MS. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3247, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

C. CLYDE ATKINS UNITED STATES COURTHOUSE

MS. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2671) to designate the United States courthouse located at 301 North Miami Avenue, Miami, Florida, as the "C. Clyde Atkins United States Courthouse".

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2671

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. DESIGNATION.

The United States courthouse at 301 North Miami Avenue, Miami, Florida, shall be known and designated as the "C. Clyde Atkins United States Courthouse".

SEC. 2. REFERENCES.

Any reference in a law, map, regulation, document, paper, or other record of the United States to the United States courthouse referred to in subsection (a) shall be deemed to be a reference to the "C. Clyde Atkins United States Courthouse".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) and the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia.

GENERAL LEAVE

MS. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members

may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 2671.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia?

There was no objection.

MS. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, this bill honors C. Clyde Atkins by naming the courthouse located at 301 North Miami Avenue, Miami, Florida, as the C. Clyde Atkins United States Courthouse. This bill has broad bipartisan support from the Florida delegation.

Judge Atkins was a Federal judge for over 30 years in south Florida and was a leader in many capacities in his community. He presided over some of the most controversial cases in south Florida and often spoke for those who had no voice. He ruled that Miami schools would no longer be racially segregated. Judge Atkins found that the City of Miami was guilty of harassment of the homeless and stopped them from arresting the homeless for eating, sleeping and bathing in public. He also ruled that Haitian and Cuban refugees should receive equal treatment.

In addition to Judge Atkins's courage from the bench, he also played a prominent leadership role in his own community. He served as president of the Dade County Bar Association, the Florida Bar Association. He was a trustee of Biscayne College and Mercy Hospital. He was also very active in the Catholic Church where he was named a knight of St. Gregory by Pope Paul VI. It is clear that Judge Atkins took the notion of being a public servant seriously and endeavored to make his service a large part of his life. In honor of Judge Atkins's public service as a Federal judge for 33 years, it is fitting to name the courthouse located at 301 North Miami Avenue in Miami, Florida, as the C. Clyde Atkins United States Courthouse, and I urge my colleagues to approve this bill.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, H.R. 2671, introduced by the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN), designates the United States courthouse located at 301 North Miami Avenue, Miami, Florida, as the C. Clyde Atkins United States Courthouse.

The bill recognizes Judge Atkins's dedication to the law and his fairness on the bench. In 1914, Judge Atkins was born in Washington, D.C. He received his law degree from the University of Florida College of Law in 1936 and began his career in the private practice of law in Stuart, Florida.

Judge Atkins's service to his community in the legal profession includes serving as president of the Dade County Bar Association, president of the Florida Bar Association, trustee of the

Mercy Hospital, and trustee of Biscayne College.

In 1966, President Lyndon Johnson appointed Judge Atkins to the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida. Judge Atkins served as chief justice on the district court from 1977 to 1982 when he assumed senior status. Judge Atkins's tenure on the bench ended with his passing at the age of 84 on March 11, 1999.

This legislation is a fitting tribute to Judge Atkins's service to equal justice. I support this legislation and urge my colleagues to do the same.

MS. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Madam Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN).

MS. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 2671, to designate the United States Courthouse located at 301 North Miami Avenue in my district of Miami, Florida, as the C. Clyde Atkins United States Courthouse.

I would like to commend my Florida colleagues for working together in a bipartisan manner to bring this bill to the floor today. I also want to thank our Florida Senators, BILL NELSON and MEL MARTINEZ, for taking the lead and introducing this bill in the Senate.

As the author of this legislation, I am pleased that this bill would take the next step toward ensuring that we can properly pay tribute to one of Florida's great jurists by naming the courthouse in Miami in honor of the stellar career of Judge Atkins.

After receiving his law degree from the University of Florida in 1936, C. Clyde Atkins worked as a distinguished attorney and held prestigious posts such as the president of the Miami-Dade County Bar Association, as well as president of the Florida Bar. In 1966, Atkins was nominated to the bench by President Lyndon Johnson. The late Judge Atkins brought tremendous honor to the legal profession through his dedicated service as a United States District Judge for the Southern District of Florida from 1966 until his death in 1999 at the age of 84.

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Judge Atkins was committed to the administration of the rule of law without consideration of race, creed, or national origin.

He was recognized for his devotion to equality by the National Conference of Christians and Jews and the Anti-Defamation League, to name just a few, Madam Speaker.

Judge Atkins was the first Catholic to be appointed to the bench in the Southern District of Florida.

His faith to his church was recognized by Pope Paul VI through his selection of Judge Atkins as a Knight of St. Gregory.

Judge Atkins was a fair and capable judge and rendered important decisions in the area of civil liberties and civil rights.